

"Behold thy Mother!" These words of our dying Lord were addressed to the beloved disciple St. John, but were intended for all mankind. Even as Mary never ceases to be the Mother of God, she never will cease to be our Mother.

#### PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

POUR forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we unto whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His passion and cross, be brought to the glory of the resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### The Litany of Loreto (Page 3-4)

#### Prayer

O HOLIEST Mary, bless me, my heart and my soul, as thou thyself wast ever blessed of God among all women; for I have this sure hope, dear Mother, that if thou bless me while I live, then, when I die, I shall be blessed of God in the everlasting glory of heaven.

Hail Mary, etc.

#### Ejaculation

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me!



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## Novena for the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Chapter 8

IV of VI



The Annunciation  
By  
Botticelli

# Novena for the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

## FIRST DAY

### The Annunciation

#### PREPARATORY PRAYER

MY QUEEN, my Mother, remember I am thine own. Keep me, guard me, as thy property and possession!

#### MEDITATION

AT NAZARETH, a mountain village in Judea, lived poor and in obscurity Mary, the virgin selected by God to become the Mother of His Son. On March 25th she was in prayer in her chamber, and perhaps sent up to heaven the yearning petition, "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened and bud a Saviour" (*Is. xlv. 8*). Behold, suddenly the chamber is suffused by a heavenly light. The archangel Gabriel stands reverently before her and says, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women. And when Mary heard the angel's words, she was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be" (*Luke i. 28, 29*).

#### PRACTICE

THE angel's salutation comprises two titles of ineffable greatness. Mary is called "full of grace," because of her innocence and purity; she is called "blessed among women," because she is the elect Mother of God. Never before was a human being thus greeted. It was God Himself who sent the message to Mary. A good angel now repaired the harm once done by a bad angel. For Lucifer, the fallen angel, seduced Eve to sin and thereby caused the ruin of the whole human race; now another angel, Gabriel, was sent to announce the glad tidings to Mary, that she was to conceive the Redeemer from sin, who was to accomplish the salvation of mankind.

Mary was troubled at the angel's words, and reflected on the meaning of the message. St. Ambrose writes: "Mary was troubled, not because the angel was a heavenly spirit, but because he appeared to her in the form of a youth. Still more was she troubled at the praises spoken to her. She was innocent and humble, and therefore reflected on the meaning of the message. She had always considered herself as a poor and unknown virgin; she deemed herself unworthy of God's grace; therefore she was troubled at the salutation. In that decisive moment she was and remained our model."

## NINTH DAY

Mary, Our Mother

#### PREPARATORY PRAYER

MY QUEEN, my Mother, remember I am thine own. Keep me, guard me, as thy property and possession!

#### MEDITATION

### MEDITATION

MARY could not consent to become the Mother of the Redeemer without including in her consent those to be redeemed. "She bore one man," says St. Antonine, "and thereby has borne all men again. Beneath the cross of her divine Son she has reborned us to life with great pain, just as Eve our first mother, has borne us under the tree of forbidden fruit unto death. That there be no doubt concerning it, her divine Son made this declaration in His last will." "When therefore Jesus had seen His Mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He saith to His Mother, Woman, behold thy son. After that He saith to the disciple, Behold thy Mother" (*John xix. 26 27*). She gave up her Son for the redemption of mankind, and He gave us, in the person of His beloved disciple St. John, to her as her children, declaring her our Mother. From that moment we belong to Mary, and Mary belongs to us: "Behold thy Mother!"

#### PRACTICE

MARY loves us because she loves God, and because God loves us. She loves us as her brethren who share human nature with her. She loves us as her children, whom she has borne to eternal life. She loves us because we are miserable and helpless. True, we offended her divine Son, but she knows our frailty, our blindness, the assaults of the flesh and the devil to which we are exposed; and by all this she is moved to come to our aid.

Do not, however, imagine that this good and amiable Mother will hear your call for assistance if you continue to offend her divine Son with malice premeditated. To obtain her aid you must make yourself in a manner worthy of it. This you do by striving to imitate her virtues. Or is there anything in her example that we are unable to imitate? True, we can not attain to her perfection in virtue, but we can copy it to a certain degree. To follow Mary's example there is no need of performing miracles, of having ecstasies, or of doing any other extraordinary deeds. All that is necessary is to persevere faithfully in the ordinary duties of life, and to perform them to the best of our ability.

the province of human experience. But when we undertake to describe the glories of the Blessed Virgin, we are on unknown ground, on a subject transcending all human effort. We fail to find words suitable to portray her sublime prerogatives, privileges, and mysteries."

#### PRACTICE

ST. ANSELM, writing on the motherhood of Mary, says: "It was eminently just and proper that the creature chosen to be the Mother of God should shine with a luster of purity far beyond anything conceivable in any other creature under heaven. For it was to her that the eternal Father decreed to give His only-begotten Son, whom He loves as Himself; and to give Him in such a mysterious manner that He should be at the same time the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary. She must indeed be purity itself, whom the Son of God elected as His Mother, and who was the chosen Spouse of the Holy Ghost, to be overshadowed by Him to bring forth the Second Person of that Most Blessed Trinity from whom He Himself proceeds."

Let us honor the virgin Mother with filial devotion, gratefully greeting her often in the words of the angel, "Hail Mary, full of grace!" Let us remember that God alone is above Mary, and beneath her is all that is not God.

#### PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

POUR forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we unto whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His passion and cross, be brought to the glory of the resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### The Litany of Loreto (Page 3-4)

##### Prayer

I BELIEVE, holiest Mary, that almighty God was ever with thee from thy conception, and is, by His incarnation, still more closely united to thee. Make it thy care, I pray thee, that I may be with that same Lord Jesus ever one heart and soul by means of sanctifying grace.

Hail Mary, etc.

##### Ejaculation

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me!

#### PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

POUR forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we unto whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His passion and cross, be brought to the glory of the resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### The Litany of Loreto In Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary

LORD, have mercy on us.  
Christ, have mercy on us.  
Lord, have mercy on us,  
Christ, hear us.  
Christ, graciously hear us.  
God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.  
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.  
God the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us.  
Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.  
Holy Mary, pray for us.  
Holy Mother of God, pray for us.  
Holy Virgin of virgins, pray for us.  
Mother of Christ, pray for us.  
Mother of divine grace, pray for us.  
Mother most pure, pray for us.  
Mother most chaste, pray for us.  
Mother inviolate, pray for us.  
Mother undefiled, pray for us.  
Mother most amiable, pray for us.  
Mother most admirable, pray for us.  
Mother of good counsel, pray for us.  
Mother of our Creator, pray for us.  
Mother of our Redeemer, pray for us.  
Virgin most prudent, pray for us.  
Virgin most venerable, pray for us.  
Virgin most renowned, pray for us.  
Virgin most powerful, pray for us.  
Virgin most merciful, pray for us.  
Virgin most faithful, pray for us.  
Mirror of justice, pray for us.  
Seat of wisdom, pray for us.  
Cause of our joy, pray for us.  
Spiritual vessel, pray for us.  
Vessel of honor, pray for us.  
Singular vessel of devotion, pray for us.  
Mystical rose, pray for us.

Tower of David, pray for us.  
Tower of ivory, pray for us.  
House of gold, pray for us.  
Ark of the covenant, pray for us.  
Gate of heaven, pray for us.  
Morning star, pray for us.  
Health of the sick, pray for us.  
Refuge of sinners, pray for us.  
Comforter of the afflicted, pray for us.  
Help of Christians, pray for us.  
Queen of angels, pray for us.  
Queen of patriarchs, pray for us.  
Queen of prophets, pray for us.  
Queen of apostles, pray for us.  
Queen of martyrs, pray for us.  
Queen of confessors, pray for us.  
Queen of virgins, pray for us.  
Queen of all saints, pray for us.  
Queen conceived without original sin, pray for us.  
Queen of the most holy rosary, pray for us.  
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world: Spare us, O Lord.  
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world: Graciously hear us, O Lord.  
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world: Have mercy on us, O Lord.  
V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God:  
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray

POUR forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by His passion and cross be brought to the glory of His resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.  
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray

VOUCHSAFE, O Lord, that we may be helped by the merits of Thy most holy Mother's spouse; that what of ourselves we can not obtain may be given us through his intercession. Who livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

POUR forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we unto whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His passion and cross, be brought to the glory of the resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Litany of Loreto (Page 3-4)

Prayer

THOUGH my tongue is unhallowed, yet, purest Virgin, I presume to hail thee every day with the angel's salutation, "Hail Mary, full of grace!" From my heart, I pray thee, pour into my soul a little of that mighty grace wherewith the Holy Spirit, overshadowing thee, filled thee to the full.

Hail Mary, etc.

Ejaculation

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me!

## EIGHTH DAY

Mary, the Mother of God

PREPARATORY PRAYER

MY QUEEN, my Mother, remember I am thine own. Keep me, guard me, as thy property and possession!

MEDITATION

MARY'S true greatness consists in her having been chosen the Mother of God. This sublime dignity, pre-eminently her own and shared by no other creature, elevates her to a station inconceivably exalted. Mother of God! St. Peter Damian thus gives expression to his conception of this dignity: "In what words may mortal man be permitted to pronounce the praises of her who brought forth that divine Word who lives for all eternity? Where can a tongue be found holy and pure enough to eulogize her who bore the author of all created things, whom the elements praise and obey in fear and trembling? When we essay to extol a martyr's constancy, to recount his heroic acts of virtue, to describe his devotion to his Savior's cause and honor, we are supplied with words by facts and occurrences that belong to

**H**OLIEST Mary, if through thy modesty thou wert troubled at the appearance of the archangel Gabriel in thy dwelling, I am terrified at the sight of my monstrous pride. By thy incomparable humility, which brought forth God for men, reopened paradise and let the captive souls go free from their prison, draw me, I pray thee, out of the deep pit into which my sins have cast me, and make me save my soul.

Hail Mary, etc.

Ejaculation

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me!

### SEVENTH DAY

Mary's Fortitude in Suffering

PREPARATORY PRAYER

MY QUEEN, my Mother, remember I am thine own. Keep me, guard me, as thy property and possession!

MEDITATION

ALTHOUGH Mary's consent was free, and freely given, she was clearly convinced and perfectly conscious of the responsibility, the obligations, and the duties involved by that consent, and which she now assumed. Great are the duties and tearful the days of a mother who has to raise her Son, who is also God, to be sacrificed on the cross. Mary assumes with the dignity this responsibility. She consents to conceive the Son of God, to give birth to Him, to nourish Him, to educate Him for the ignominious death of the cross. When she pronounced the words, "Be it done," her eyes were fixed on the distant tragedy of Golgotha, on the cross towering upon its height. Yet she accepts it, together with the dignity of Mother of God.

PRACTICE

MARY, in consenting to become the Mother of Jesus, became not only His Mother, but the Mother of all mankind. She became, for all time, the refuge of sinners, the health of the sick, the intercessor with God for man; she consented to exercise a mother's love for suffering and sinful humanity. But alas, how many of those adopted by Mary as her children under the cross of her dying Son are unworthy of her mother love! How many are rebellious children, who fill her heart with sorrow and anguish! Others, faithless and obdurate, become a reproach to her. Have you, during your past life, always been a good child of this loving Mother? Are you to her an honor or a disgrace, a joy or a sorrow?

Prayer

WITH wonder I revere thee, holiest Virgin Mary; for of all God's creatures thou wast the humblest on the very day of thy annunciation, when God Himself exalted Thee to the sublime dignity of His own Mother. O mightiest Virgin, make me, wretched sinner that I am, know the depths of my own nothingness, and make me humble myself at last with all my heart, beneath the feet of all men.

Hail Mary, etc.

Ejaculation

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me!

### SECOND DAY

The Import of the Angel's Salutation

PREPARATORY PRAYER

MY QUEEN, my Mother, remember I am thine own. Keep me, guard me, as thy property and possession!

MEDITATION

"HAIL, full of grace!" Mary was greeted as full of grace by the Giver of grace Himself. The angel's salutation meant: "The grace of God has preserved thee from all sin. Neither the stain of original sin, nor the guilt of actual sin, ever obscured the mirror of thy soul. By the special favor of God the most sublime virtues were infused into thy soul."

"The Lord is with thee." From all eternity the Lord was with Mary. He was with her not only as He is with His whole creation, but He was with her in a special manner. The eternal Father was with her from all eternity as with His beloved Daughter. The divine Son was with her from all eternity as with His chosen Mother. The Holy Ghost was with her from all eternity as with His beloved Spouse. This intimate union never was disrupted. Therefore Mary is "Blessed among women," and ever was, and ever shall be the beloved of the Lord.

PRACTICE

CONSIDER how Mary receives the angel's message. She is troubled, she is disturbed at the praise, at the reverence of the angel. What an example of humility! Let us imitate her in this virtue by the acknowledgment before

God of our weakness, our unworthiness, our nothingness, and by ordering our whole being accordingly. Humility renders us pleasing in the sight of God and makes us susceptible of His grace. Hence St. Augustine writes: "God resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble. What a terrible punishment for the proud, what a splendid reward for the humble! The proud man resembles a rock, the humble man a beautiful valley. The grace of God descends from heaven like a gentle rain. It can not penetrate the rock of pride, and hence the proud man loses God's grace and love. But in the valley of humility the waters of divine grace can diffuse themselves and fructify the soul of the humble man, so that it may bring forth fruit unto eternal life."

#### PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

POUR forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we unto whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His passion and cross, be brought to the glory of the resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Litany of Loreto (Page 3-4)

#### Prayer

O MARY, holiest Virgin, who, when the archangel Gabriel hailed thee in thy annunciation, and thou wast raised by God above all choirs of the angels, didst confess thyself "the handmaid of the Lord"; do thou obtain for me true humility and a truly angelic purity, and so to live on earth as ever to be worthy of the blessings of God.

Hail Mary, etc.

#### Ejaculation

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me!

### THIRD DAY

The Effect of the Angel's Salutation

#### PREPARATORY PRAYER

MY QUEEN, my Mother, remember I am thine own. Keep me, guard me, as thy property and possession!

#### MEDITATION

THE effect of the angel's salutation on Mary was striking. Imbued with sentiments

property and possession!

#### MEDITATION

WE ADMIRE the creative word of God, by which heaven and earth were called into existence. But Mary's word, "Be it done to me according to thy word," is even mightier and more efficacious; for it commands the obedience even of the almighty Creator. Without this word of humility and obedience the incarnation of our divine Saviour would not have been accomplished. Mary does not say, "I accept the proposal, I agree to the proposition," nor does she use other words of similar import. She simply says, "Be it done to me according to thy word." It was not her own choice, nor her own decision, but a voluntary, full, and complete surrender to the will of God that the message found in Mary's soul, which was expressed in these words. What a source of consolation to her in the subsequent sorrowful and afflicted stages of her life was this complete surrender to God's will! It comprised the tranquilizing assurance that He to whose designs she submitted, would endow her with the fortitude and strength necessary to co-operate with them.

#### PRACTICE

JUST as our divine Lord Himself became obedient unto death, thus also His incarnation and the motherhood of Mary were the result of obedience. Again, in contemplating the works that in the course of time were undertaken in the Church for the glory of God and the salvation of man, we find that only those were really great, effective, and enduring, which had their beginning, continuation, and consummation in obedience.

Rejoice, then, if it is your happy lot to walk in the safe path of obedience. Avail yourself of every opportunity to submit your will to the will of your Superiors. They are the representatives of God. By obeying them we fulfil His will, not the will of men. St. Bonaventure calls obedience the key of heaven.

#### PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

POUR forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we unto whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His passion and cross, be brought to the glory of the resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Litany of Loreto (Page 3-4)

#### Prayer

## PRACTICE

MARY did not entertain a single doubt concerning the wonders which the angel announced to her about the coming Messiah and His kingdom. She believed with simple faith the words of the heavenly messenger. Only about that which concerned her personally she asked a question. When the wonderful mystery was explained to her, she did not ask how this *can* be done, but only how it *shall* be done. And after the angel had declared to her that she shall conceive by the Holy Ghost, she was fully resigned and announced her implicit belief in these humble words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word" (*Luke* i. 38). Therefore the Holy Ghost Himself praised her by the mouth of Elizabeth: "Blessed art thou that hast believed" (*Luke* i. 45).

Let us remain steadfast in the profession of all articles of faith, and let us oppose, like a strong shield, the words, "Nothing is impossible with God," to all attacks of unbelievers, and to all doubts that may arise in our own minds.

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

POUR forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we unto whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His passion and cross, be brought to the glory of the resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Litany of Loreto (Page 3-4)

### Prayer

MARY most holy, I see that thy obedience united thee so closely to God, that all creation never shall know again union so fair and so perfect. I am overwhelmed with confusion in seeing how my sins have separated me from God. Help me, then, gentle Mother, to repent sincerely of my sins, that I may be reunited to thy loving Jesus.

Hail Mary, etc.

### Ejaculation

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me!

## SIXTH DAY

### Mary's Consent

## PREPARATORY PRAYER

MY QUEEN, my Mother, remember I am thine own. Keep me, guard me, as thy

quite different from ours, she was troubled at the praise addressed to her. Meanwhile she is silent and considers within herself what might be the meaning of these words. And now the angel calls her by name, saying, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father: and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (*Luke* i. 30-33).

## PRACTICE

LET us admire the prudence shining forth in Mary. After hearing the angel's words of praise she was silent and thought within herself what kind of a salutation this was. She is very careful and prudent. On this her conduct St. Thomas Aquinas remarks: "Mary did not refuse to believe, nor did she receive the message with credulity. She avoided Eve's gullibility and the distrust of Zachary the high priest." And St. Bernard writes: "Mary preferred to remain silent in humility, rather than to speak inconsiderately." Let us strive always to speak and act with deliberation. Our conversation ought always to be judicious; for often a word spoken inconsiderately causes bitter regret. St. Thomas Aquinas observes: "Song was given to a number of creatures, but human beings alone were endowed with the faculty of speech, to indicate that in speaking we should use our reason." And St. Chrysostom says: "Let us always guard our tongue; not that it should always be silent, but that it should speak at the proper time."

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

POUR forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we unto whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His passion and cross, be brought to the glory of the resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Litany of Loreto (Page 3-4)

### Prayer

I REJOICE with thee, O Virgin ever blessed, because by thy humble word of consent thou didst draw down from the bosom of the eternal Father the divine Word into thy own pure bosom. O draw, then, ever my heart to God; and with God bring grace into my heart that I may ever sincerely bless thy word of consent, so mighty and so efficacious.

Hail Mary, etc.

Ejaculation

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me!

#### **FOURTH DAY**

Mary's Question

PREPARATORY PRAYER

MY QUEEN, my Mother, remember I am thine own. Keep me, guard me, as thy property and possession!

MEDITATION

WELL versed as Mary was in Holy Scripture, she fully understood the words she had heard and knew their great import. She was destined to become the Mother of the Most High, the Son of God. But there is an obstacle which prevents her from giving immediate assent. She has solemnly vowed her virginity to God. Not knowing how the mystery announced to her was to be accomplished, and intent above all on keeping inviolate her vow, she interrupts her silence by the short but comprehensive question, "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" (*Luke i. 34.*) This is the first word of Mary recorded in the Gospel.

PRACTICE

"HOW shall this be done, because I know not man?" Truly a momentous question, proceeding from her knowledge of the great excellence and value before God of virginity, which, before Mary, was unknown to the world.

Let us follow Mary's example and esteem holy purity and chastity above all things. Let us remember how highly Holy Scripture extols this virtue. "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and with men" (*Wis. iv. 1*). St. Athanasius writes: "O chastity, thou precious pearl, found by few, even hated by some, and sought only by those who are worthy of thee! Thou art the joy of the prophets, the ornament of the apostles, the life of the angels, the crown of the saints." Let us therefore carefully guard this inestimable treasure.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

POUR forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we unto whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may,

by His passion and cross, be brought to the glory of the resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Litany of Loreto (Page 3-4)

Prayer

MARY, mighty Virgin, thou who on the day of thy annunciation wast found by the archangel so prompt and ready to do God's will, and to correspond with the desires of the august Trinity, who wished for thy consent in order to redeem the world; obtain for me that, whatever happens, good or ill, I may turn to my God, and with resignation say, "Be it done unto me according to thy word."

Hail Mary, etc.

Ejaculation

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me!

#### **FIFTH DAY**

The Solution

PREPARATORY PRAYER

MY QUEEN, my Mother, remember I am thine own. Keep me, guard me, as thy property and possession!

MEDITATION

THE angel explains to Mary how, without detriment to her virginity, she will become a mother. He says, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (*Luke i. 35*). St. Bernard remarks: "Let him who can, comprehend it. Who, but that most happy Virgin who was worthy to experience the influence and effect of the power of the Most High and to penetrate this sublime mystery, can understand how the divine Light was poured into the Virgin's womb? The Most Holy Trinity alone co-operated in the sacred act, and it remains an impenetrable mystery to all, except to her who was called to so sublime a destiny."